

SENATE RESOLUTION 15

By Lamar

A RESOLUTION to recognize Memphis native Jerry Schilling for his many contributions to the arts and cultural history.

WHEREAS, it is the privilege of the members of this legislative body to honor those enterprising individuals who have long been devoted stewards of arts and culture in Tennessee and beyond; and

WHEREAS, one such individual is Memphis native Jerry Schilling, a noted talent manager, producer, and author who has contributed greatly to American music and film and our collective knowledge of the King of Rock and Roll, Elvis Presley; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Schilling was born in the Bluff City on February 6, 1942; his early years were fraught with tribulations, including his mother's passing, several bouts of illness, and economic hardship; and

WHEREAS, his fate began to take a turn in 1954 when, at the age of twelve, he joined a touch football game with some local kids, among them nineteen-year-old Elvis, who cut his first record that same year and who, just two years later, would reach the height of stardom; and

WHEREAS, the two forged a friendship that would last twenty-three years, until the King's untimely passing in 1977; Jerry Schilling has been cited as "one of the few guys who would tell Elvis the truth," and in turn, Elvis grew to respect his opinion as a trusted friend, confidante, and business partner; and

WHEREAS, though he had set out to become a history teacher, that plan was fortuitously thwarted when he was invited by Elvis himself to join his team in the mid-1960s; Mr. Schilling thus became one of a handful of people working for Elvis at the time, filling in in

whatever capacity as the need arose, whether it be as a security guard or simply a companion;
and

WHEREAS, over the years, he took on more important roles, at one point serving as creative affairs director of Elvis Presley Enterprises, and became one of the members of the "Memphis Mafia," a tight-knit group of Elvis's most loyal and trusted friends who were always in tow, even living at Graceland; and

WHEREAS, in 1974, he left Elvis to manage the Beach Boys, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Billy Joel. He later went on to manage Elvis's daughter, Lisa Marie Presley; and

WHEREAS, Jerry Schilling honed his editing chops working behind the scenes on such projects as the acclaimed 1972 documentary *Elvis On Tour* and lent his expertise to such television projects as biographies on Brian Wilson and Sun Records chief Sam Phillips; his best known projects include *Elvis & Nixon* (2016), for which he was an executive producer; *Heartbreak Hotel* (1988), for which he was an executive advisor; and *Great Balls of Fire!* (1989), for which he was a technical advisor; and

WHEREAS, Jerry Schilling is also an author; the last holdout of Memphis Mafia to pen a book about his friend, he wrote *Me and a Guy Named Elvis: My Lifelong Friendship with Elvis Presley* (2006) in collaboration with writer Chuck Crisafulli; the book is a frank, warm, and candid memoir of his life with Elvis and did a great deal to elucidate the humanity of the beloved icon; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Schilling continued to give back to his hometown when he was tapped to serve as CEO of the Memphis Music Commission, a position he held for over three years;
and

WHEREAS, most recently, Jerry Schilling saw himself portrayed on the silver screen by Luke Bracey in Baz Luhrmann's 2022 film *Elvis*, which further memorialized Mr. Schilling's significant role in music history; and

WHEREAS, although he currently resides in California, Mr. Schilling will forever be a son of Tennessee, and it is most fitting that we honor his invaluable work over the years; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we honor and commend Jerry Schilling for his many contributions to the arts and cultural history as a talent manager, producer, and author, extending our best wishes for much continued success and happiness.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.